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YOU CAN LEARN TO WRITE

By Bob McElwain

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While on the phone with a fellow a while back, he mentioned he wanted to start a business on the Web. When I asked what he planned to do, he had a couple of good answers. But he qualified all by saying his writing skills were not sufficient.

I hear this often. And it saddens me some way. This fellow had demonstrated strong verbal skills. And that he is bright, with solid values and attitudes in place. When I suggested he need only write as he was speaking to me, I don't think he bought it.

Another fellow recently made the same claim, and felt he would have to hire all the writing on his site. After a first glance at his email, one might be inclined to agree. But when I looked closer, there were only three formatting problems. No capitalization. No spaces between sentences. No returns at the end of a line, so the wrap made it look awful. But upon a closer look, the only significant problem came from the haste with which he wrote.

The Secret To Writing On The Web

KISS! That is, keep it super simple. You are not trying to win the Pulitzer Prize. You are simply trying to explain a point as to a friend or customer. The only difference is you are making the point with written, rather than spoken, words.

About Those Rules

The rules which govern proper use of English were important when you were in school, trying to pass a course. In the world of the Web, many do not matter much.

Sure, your site needs to be sharp. And the content must be well written. But what does "well written" mean?

I always hesitate to say anything about how to write, for I have forgotten most of the rules. And I frequently break those I do remember.

Above, for example, the sentence which begins with "And I

.." is incorrect because it begins with a conjunction. But if I leave it out, the single sentence will be 26 words in length. Too long for easy reading.

Besides, that's not the way I would make this point to a friend. What I might say is something like. "I don't like to say things about writing. There're too many rules I don't remember. And I break a lot of 'em."

How Would You Put It?

It doesn't matter how you choose to make the point. Just write as you would explain it to a friend or site visitor. So long as it is acceptable English and the reader understands your point, that is the end of it.

Hail To The Purest!

The above may bring comments. There are lots of people who expect English to be used correctly. They object when it is not. This point of view is valid. And the need for well written content is overlooked or ignored on far too many websites. However, ...

Only Your Target Matters

To build a successful online business, all must be carefully directed at your perfect customer. Every word on every page must be directed specifically to your target.

If your target is serious students of psychology, your writing skills must be strong. And the rules of English matter.

If your target is fly fisherman, there is a bit of a dilemma in that they likely cover the spectrum in terms of careers, social status, and so forth. Their definition of what writing level is sufficient will vary enormously.

Yet when you speak to them, you will be talking about fly fishing. Regardless of other interests, they will be interested in the topic or they will not be on your site. They want to know which is the best fly rod, and why. Where the fish are hiding. And more about ways to hook one of these elusive creatures.

What matters is presenting the information your target wants in a way in which they can easily grasp it. Against this need, the rules of proper English matter hardly at all.

Ways To Make It Happen

A good point at which to begin the task of improving writing skills is to study the way in which newspaper articles are written. Give it some time, and you'll see all is written simply. You may even discover that the reading level is about 8th grade.

Why? Not because people are poor readers. Editors want people to find it easy to read their content. This improves the chance that they will. Both of these characteristics of news copy are perfect for your website. Targeted, simple, easy to read page content should be the goal on every site.

Search on "writing tutorials" and you'll find a bunch. And you may find some quite helpful. But forget trying to remember all the rules. Focus on ideas that will improve your writing. On my site, click on Topics in the navigation bar to the left. Then on Writing Skills. There are some good ideas and references here for approaching this task.

How To Make It Happen

In the end, though, there is no better way to improve your writing skills than to write. Edit, rewrite, and smooth as possible. Then write something else. If you consistently seek to do a better job with your next writing task, you will find improvement almost immediately.

One good starting point is your email. Write each reply

carefully. Always reread and edit. Then seek to make your next reply stronger. While practice will not bring perfection, it will bring continuing improvement.

What Does "I Can't Write" Mean?

You may be fearful of putting your thoughts in front of others. You may not want to accept the corresponding risk of criticism. You may somehow feel you are not "good enough." That what you have to offer is of little importance.

If you have concerns such as these, attempting to start a business online or offline is a bad idea. They will severely limit your success, far more than your writing skills level.

Often, however, such a statement means only that you are uncomfortable putting your thoughts into words on paper. Not many enjoyed their English classes in school. Or the predictable assignment: "How I Spent My Summer Vacation." If your resistance to writing amounts to things of this sort, a bit of practice is all you need. It is not a giant leap from speaking effectively

to your target to writing to them.

The two examples mentioned above of people who felt their writing skills were not sufficient are representative of many. In very short order, either of these two men could be writing effectively. Not a novel, mind you. But content directed at a specific target such as fisherman. You can do the same.

Bob McElwain Want to build a winning site? Improve one you already have? Fix one that's busted? Get ANSWERS. Subscribe to "STAT News" now! <mailto:join-stat@lists.dundee.net> Web marketing and consulting since 1993 Site: Phone: 209-742-6349

How To Use The Internet For God

By Mae Mueller

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Do you have a Christian product, service or message that you would like to inexpensively advertise and distribute around your town or all over the world?

Would you like to invite more people in your city to your church?

YOU CAN LEARN TO WRITE

Would you like to find out how to inexpensively write a Christian book and distribute it around the world?

Would you like to reach around the world and help people come to know Christ better?

Would you like to learn inexpensive ways to powerfully support missionaries or help feed hungry children?

Using the Internet for God is the e-book that will tell you how to tap into the power of the Internet and use it for God's glory.

Most people do not have the funding to do a nationwide television, radio, newspaper or magazine ad campaign.

The Internet is a tool that most people can afford to use to get the word out about their Christian products, services and causes.

The problem is, most people don't have a clue about how to use Internet effectively as an advertising or distribution tool.

Fortunately, a Christian owner of an Internet marketing company has put together this easy to use guide about how to use the Internet simply and powerfully to get the word out about important Christian products, services, causes and messages.

Some of the amazing things you will learn include:

- * How to put together an inexpensive website where people can learn about or order your Christian product, service, cause or message.
- * Learn how to write compelling written sales copy that actually gets people to take action after they read the content on your site.
- * Learn how to get lots of targeted traffic to your web site (it doesn't make a lot of sense to have a web site if the right people are not going to visit it).
- * Learn how to get a free website for your church or for a missionary.
- * Learn the same techniques that professional Internet marketers use to get more customers to their sites (at least the ethical ones).
- * Learn some fund-raising techniques that tap into the power of the Internet.
- * Learn how to write your own e-book and offer it for sale all around the world using the Internet (it is a lot easier to become a Christian author than you think).

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